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AREA 88

by KAORU SHINTANI

28

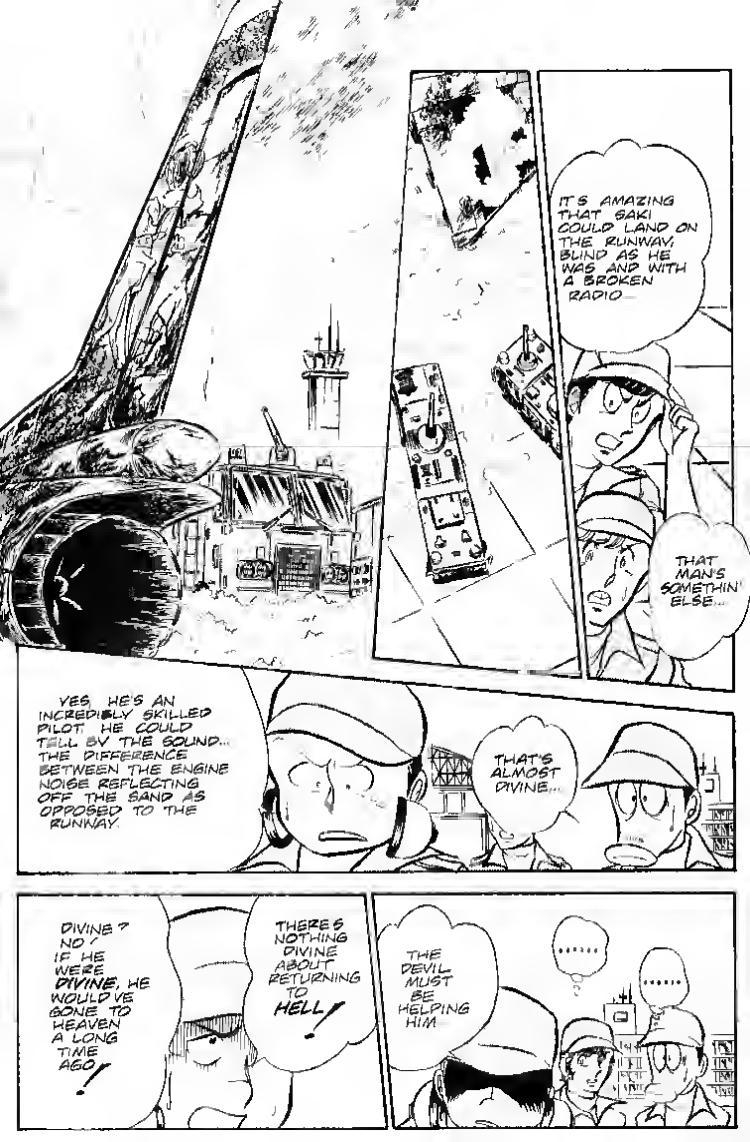
Captured by Enemy Forces Mick is Presented With A Strange Offer From Saki's Brother Rishar

BIMONTHLY

VIZ COMICS

Mission 28:
to vultures...
lead bullets

ANESTHESIA!
SCALPEL!
BREATHING, PULSE-- NORMAL...
Beep Beep Beep
CLAMP!
BLOOD PRESSURE IS WEAKENING!
tik tik tik
SEIKO QUARTZ
SURGERY IN PROGRESS
.....


IT'S AMAZING THAT SAKI COULD LAND ON THE RUNWAY, BLIND AS HE WAS AND WITH A BROKEN RADIO...
THAT MAN'S SOMETHIN' ELSE...
YES, HE'S AN INCREDIBLY SKILLED PILOT. HE COULD TELL BY THE SOUND... THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ENGINE NOISE REFLECTING OFF THE SAND AS OPPOSED TO THE RUNWAY.
THAT'S ALMOST DIVINE...
DIVINE? NO! IF HE WERE DIVINE, HE WOULD'VE GONE TO HEAVEN A LONG TIME AGO!
THERE'S NOTHING DIVINE ABOUT RETURNING TO HELL!
THE DEVIL MUST BE HELPING HIM...
.....
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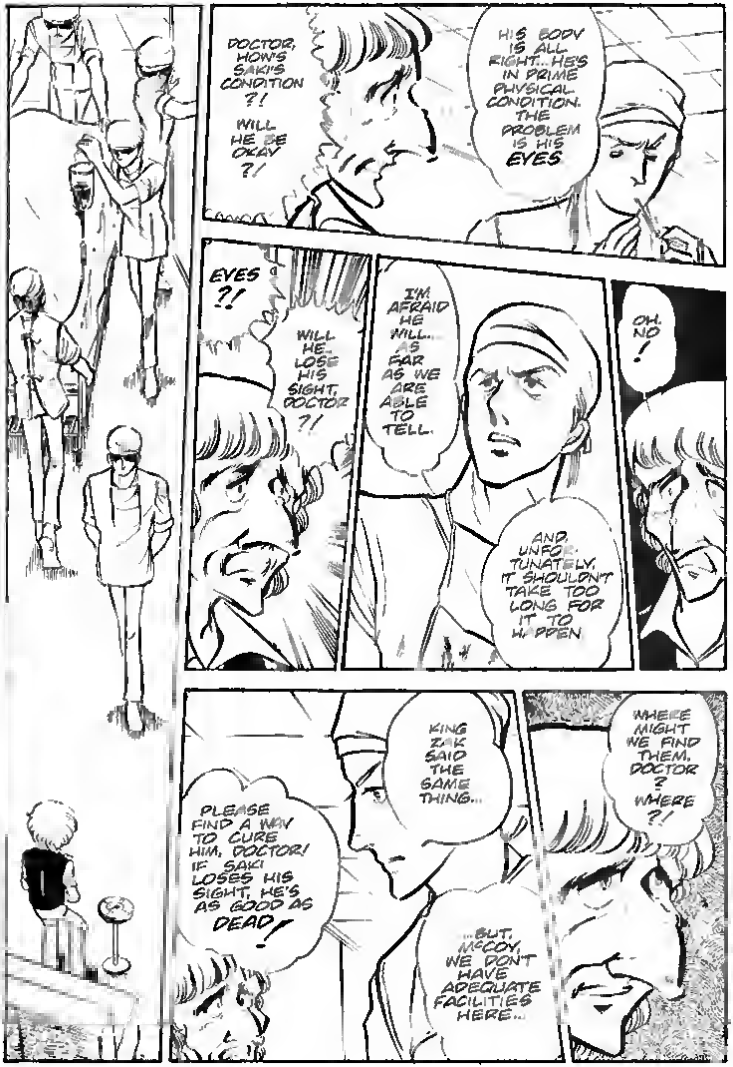
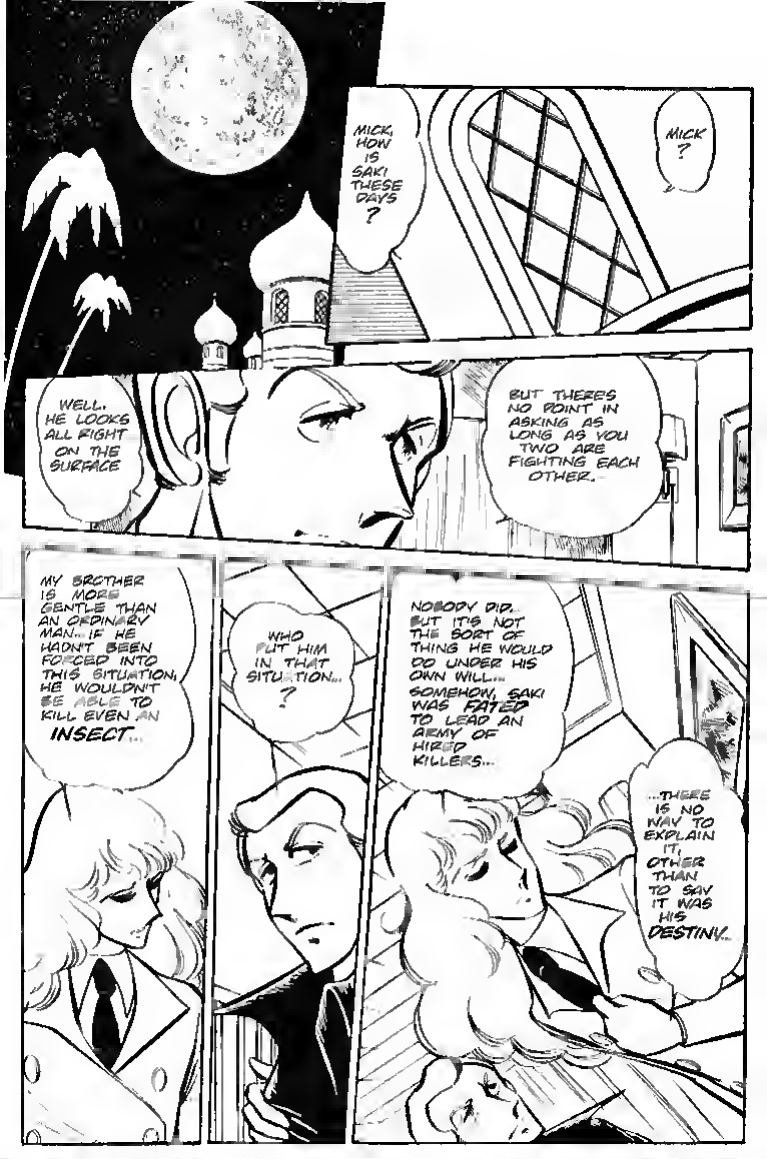

DOCTOR, HOW'S SAKI'S CONDITION ?!
WILL HE BE OKAY ?!
HIS BODY IS ALL RIGHT... HE'S IN PRIME PHYSICAL CONDITION. THE PROBLEM IS HIS EYES
EYES ?!
WILL HE LOSE HIS SIGHT, DOCTOR ?!
I'M AFRAID HE WILL... SO FAR AS WE ARE ABLE TO TELL.
AND, UNFO... TUNATELY, IT SHOULDN'T TAKE TOO LONG FOR IT TO HAPPEN
OH, NO !
PLEASE FIND A WAY TO CURE HIM, DOCTOR! IF SAKI LOSES HIS SIGHT, HE'S AS GOOD AS DEAD!
KING ZAK SAID THE SAME THING...
...BUT, MCCOY, WE DON'T HAVE ADEQUATE FACILITIES HERE...
WHERE MIGHT WE FIND THEM, DOCTOR ? WHERE ?!

I HAVE JUST FINISHED DISCUSSING THIS MATTER WITH THE KING OVER THE PHONE.
THERE IS A DOCTOR IN ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, WHO IS A WORLD RENOWNED SPECIALIST IN OPTIC NERVE SURGERY. WE'VE DECIDED TO SEND SAKI THERE. I THINK, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, THAT IT IS OUR BEST COURSE OF ACTION.
WILL THIS DOCTOR BE ABLE TO CURE HIM?
I CAN'T GUARANTEE IT, BUT HIS CHANCES ARE, QUITE FRANKLY, MUCH BETTER OVER THERE THAN HERE.
I SEE... YOU CAN USE MY C-130... THAT HERCULES WAS SPECIFICALLY REMODELLED TO CARRY PRECISION INSTRUMENTS. IT'S THE BEST PLANE AVAILABLE FOR A SAFE AND STEADY FLIGHT. I'M SURE IT WILL BE USEFUL.
BUT WHAT I'M WORRYING ABOUT IS WHETHER OR NOT SAKI WILL AGREE TO GO...
HE MAY NOT BE WILLING TO LEAVE THE CASE...
.....

Vee Vee Vee Vee
Vee Vee Vee
AHH... THAT DAMN NOISE! WHO'S RUNNING AN ELECTRIC SHAVER INSIDE MY SKULL?!
STOP IT! GO AWAY! I'VE GOT A HEADACHE! DAMN...
Vee Vee
UHM...
ARE YOU AWAKE NOW, MR MICK SIMON..?
UH. OUCH!-- GIVE MY POOR HEAD A SECOND TO CLEAR NOW. WHO ARE YOU, MISTER? WHICH NUMBER BASE IS THIS?

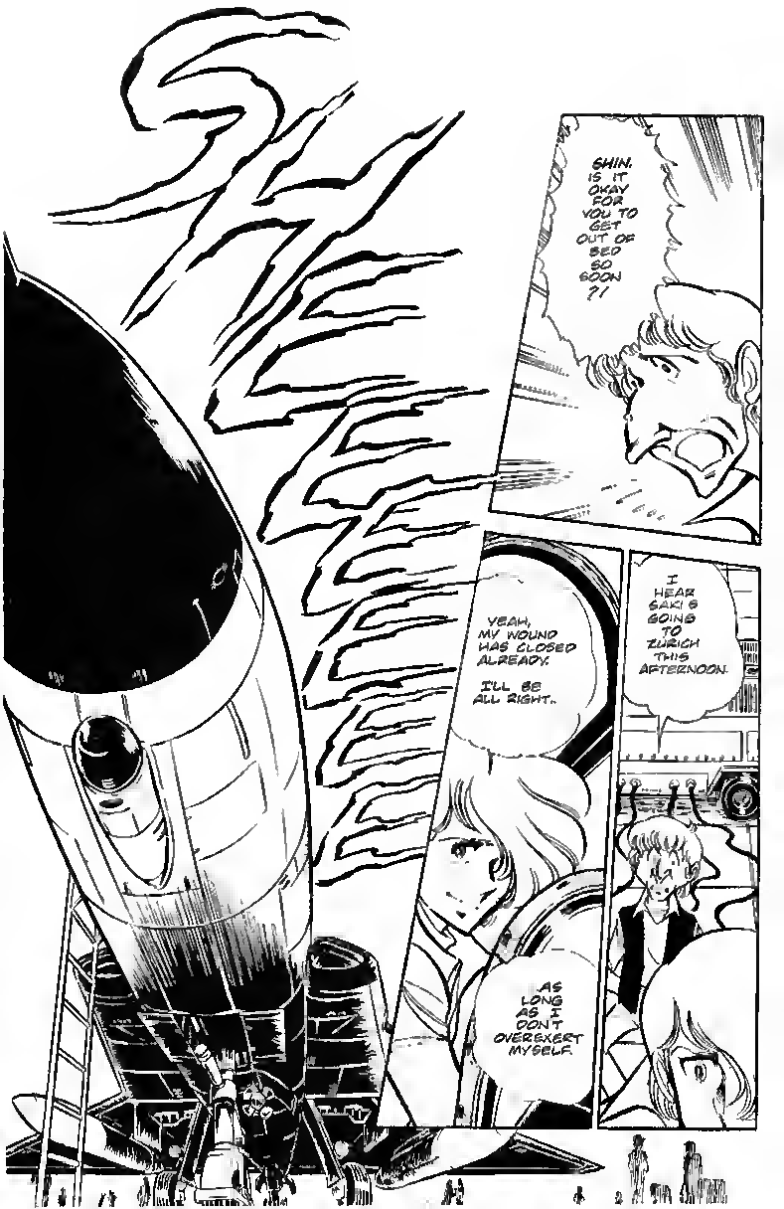
I'M AFRAID THAT THIS IS NOT A NUMBERED BASE, MR SIMON..
THEN-- OW! IS THIS A NOMAD'S CAMP? WHERE HAVE I LANDED ?
THIS IS A BASE OF YOUR ENEMIES-- NAMELY, THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORCES !
.....
I SEE... I REMEMBER NOW.. DAMN. I FEEL DIZZY..
YEAH.. I WAS SURROUNDED BY HUNDREDS OF ENEMY PLANES, AND I CHARGED THEM, READY TO DIE..
YES.. THE WAY YOU FOUGHT WAS MOST IMPRESSIVE, MR SIMON EVEN OUR FORCES DON'T HAVE WARRIORS AS BRAVE AS YOU!
THANKS FOR THE PRAISE AND TO SHOW MY GRATITUDE, I'LL LET YOU CALL ME 'NICK'

GET OUT OF HERE!
BY THE WAY, CAN I ASK YOU FOR A SMALL FAVOUR?
AND DON'T COME BACK UNTIL MY HEADACHE'S GONE!
CERTAINLY... WHAT IS IT?
AH, MR. SIMON... THANK YOU FOR LIVING UP TO MY EXPECTATIONS. YOU ARE TRULY ONE OF MY BROTHER'S MEN. EVEN AFTER SUCH A BEATING, YOU STILL HAVE YOUR FANGS!
YOUR BROTHER...?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I AM PRINCE RISHAR VASHUTARL!
YOUR COMMANDER, SAKI VASHUTARL, IS MY BROTHER!
RISHAR...? BROTHER...?
YOU'RE... SAKI'S BROTHER...?


MICK, HOW IS SAKI THESE DAYS?
MICK?
WELL, HE LOOKS ALL RIGHT ON THE SURFACE
BUT THERE'S NO POINT IN ASKING AS LONG AS YOU TWO ARE FIGHTING EACH OTHER.
MY BROTHER IS MORE GENTLE THAN AN ORDINARY MAN... IF HE HADN'T BEEN FORCED INTO THIS SITUATION, HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO KILL EVEN AN INSECT...
WHO PUT HIM IN THAT SITUATION...?
NOBODY DID.. BUT IT'S NOT THE SORT OF THING HE WOULD DO UNDER HIS OWN WILL... SOMEHOW, SAKI WAS FATED TO LEAD AN ARMY OF HIRED KILLERS...
...THERE IS NO WAY TO EXPLAIN IT, OTHER THAN TO SAY IT WAS HIS DESTINY...

WELL... IF YOU LOOK INTO THEIR ORIGINS, YOU FIND THAT MOST WARS AREN'T BEGUN FOR SPECIFIC REASONS. YOU'RE ALWAYS LEFT WONDERING IF THERE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN A BETTER SOLUTION...
THEN, IN THE END, YOU DECIDE IT WAS JUST FATE... THAT'S THE EXCUSE EVERYONE USES.
THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT, MICK...
MANY WHO FIGHT HAVE NO IDEA WHY THEY'RE RISKING THEIR LIVES. THEY DO NOT KNOW WHY THEY ARE FIGHTING--THE REASONS FOR THE BLOODSHED AND BATTLE... AND EVEN IF THEY DO REALIZE THE WAR IS MEANINGLESS, THEY ARE HELPLESS TO STOP IT.
HISTORY FLOWS IN JUST THIS WAY. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS... AND PERHAPS THERE IS NO OTHER WAY...
...THE PEOPLE OF ASRAN MUST BE THINKING THAT MY FATHER AND I STARTED ALL THIS, BETRAYING THEM...
THOSE THINGS DON'T MATTER TO ME! I'M A MERCENARY. I FIGHT FOR ANYONE, SO LONG AS THE MONEY'S RIGHT!
THEN, I WILL GLADLY PAY YOU!
WILL YOU FIGHT FOR ME?!

WE HAVE OUR OWN STRICT CODE OF CONDUCT, LIKE ALL PROFESSIONALS... AND WE HAVE CONTRACTS... CONTRACTS THAT CAN'T BE BROKEN, NO MATTER WHAT...
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE ME...I'M A PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER!
WHAT'S SO FUNNY, MICK?
BUT YOU'RE FREE TO CHOOSE WHETHER YOU GO TO HEAVEN OR HELL...
YEP THAT'S INCLUDED IN THE CONTRACT...
EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO DIE FOR IT?
SORRY KID...LET ME THINK ABOUT YOUR OFFER NEXT TIME, IF I'M STILL ALIVE!!!
RIGHT NOW, I'M ON SAKI'S SIDE...
.....


SHIN, IS IT OKAY FOR YOU TO GET OUT OF BED SO SOON?!
I HEAR SAKI'S GOING TO ZURICH THIS AFTERNOON.
YEAH, MY WOUND WAS CLOSED ALREADY.
I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
AS LONG AS I DON'T OVEREXERT MYSELF.

HUH... I CAN'T SEE HIM NOW, BECAUSE I'VE GOT TO PREPARE FOR MY SORTIE... SAY HELLO TO HIM FOR ME, OKAY?
POOR SAKI. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS IN SWITZERLAND, HE LOSES... I WONDER IF HE MIGHT NOT BE HAPPIER IF HE BECAME BLIND ALTOGETHER...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IF HE REGAINS HIS EYESIGHT, HE'LL HAVE TO COME BACK HERE AGAIN...
...AND THEN HE'LL KEEP ON FIGHTING 'TIL ANOTHER PART OF HIS BODY'S DESTROYED.
.....
IF HE CAN'T SEE HE WON'T HAVE TO COME BACK FROM ZURICH!
HE CAN LIVE AT EASE FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE...
McCOY, WE'RE USED TO SEEING DEATH BOTH THE PASSING OF OTHERS AND OURSELVES.
WHAT WE ARE AFRAID OF MOST IS NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE IT WHEN IT COMES!

EVEN IF WE LOSE OUR HANDS, EVEN IF WE LOSE OUR LEGS - AT LEAST WE CAN KEEP OUR EYES OPEN..
..WE WANT TO WITNESS OUR END WITH OUR OWN EYES, UNTIL OUR LAST MOMENT.
I COULDN'T STAND BEING DRAGGED FROM THE WORLD OF DARKNESS INTO THE WORLD OF DEATH.
..EVEN IF THE FIRES OF HELL WERE TO BURN MY BODY, I WANT TO WITNESS MY DEATH WITH MY OWN EYES UNTIL MY BODY IS TURNED TO ASHES.
YOU'VE JUST SAID THE SAME THING SAKI DID..
..WHAT I WORRIED ABOUT MOST WAS HOW WE COULD CONVINCE HIM TO GO TO ZURICH.. EVEN THOUGH IT WOULD MEAN LEAVING THE BASE UNDER SOMEONE ELSE'S COMMAND FOR A WHILE..
..BUT HE AGREED TO IT EASILY.. AND TOLD US THE SAME THING YOU JUST SAID. SAKI WANTS TO LOOK DEATH IN THE EYE WHEN IT COMES..
.....

I WONDER WHAT GOD IS THINKING...
I DON'T KNOW ANYMORE..
IT'S EASY..
..FUTURE TO CHILDREN.. AND COMFORT TO OLD PEOPLE
...GOD GIVES HOPE TO PEOPLE COURAGE TO MEN LOVE TO WOMEN.
..LEAD BULLETS...
...AND TO VULTURES LIKE US... GOD GIVES...
SHIN...

OUR NATION WILL HAVE NO FUTURE, UNLESS WE REFORM IT!
THE UNIQUE NATURE OF THIS COUNTRY MAY DISAPPEAR BY INTRODUCING ANOTHER CULTURE, BY BRINGING SWEEPING CHANGE.
..BUT THE PEOPLE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO ENDURE HARDSHIP AND POVERTY JUST TO RETAIN THEIR HERITAGE! THE FUTURE CANNOT BE SACRIFICED FOR THE PAST!
MY FATHER'S GOAL IS TO REFORM THIS COUNTRY!
IT'S BEEN AN EXPENSIVE REFORM! YOU CAN'T EVEN COUNT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIED FOR IT ON YOUR FINGERS AND TOES!
I WAS REALLY AT A LOSS WHEN MY BROTHER TOLD ME TO PERSUADE MY FATHER TO JOIN UNCLE ZAK...
..FOR I LOVE THEM BOTH.
..I CAN UNDERSTAND THE WAY BOTH OF THEM FEEL!
THEIR INTENTIONS HAVE NEVER BEEN IN QUESTION-- ONLY THEIR MEANS IT IS CLEAR THAT BOTH MY FATHER AND UNCLE ZAK WANT TO MAKE THIS COUNTRY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE...
BUT INSTEAD IT HAS COME TO THE WORST SITUATION POSSIBLE...

MICK, WE ALSO HAVE A STRICT CODE OF CONDUCT! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE SHOT UPON YOUR ARRIVAL HERE.
I PREVENTED THAT!
I SHOULD THANK YOU FOR THAT, BUT YOU CAN STILL KILL ME IF YOU WANT TO, PRINCE FISHAR
IT IS THE PRIVILEGE OF WAR
NO, I JUST WANT YOU TO REALIZE THAT YOU ARE INDEBTED TO ME, BECAUSE I NEED TO ASK YOU ONE THING!
I WANT TO ABOLISH THE MONARCHY IN THIS COUNTRY!
!?
I HAVE FINALLY PERSUADED MY FATHER AFTER MANY YEARS OF TRYING
...I NEED MY BROTHER TO COOPERATE WITH ME NOW

PLEASE TELL MY BROTHER TO DO EVERYTHING IN HIS POWER TO PERSUADE KING ZAK..
..TELL HIM...THE PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE THE RULING POWER...
CHANGING TO A DEMOCRACY IS FINE... BUT WHEN THE NEW SYSTEM IS COMPLETED...
WHAT WILL YOU DO IF THE PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY DECIDE YOU SHOULD BE KILLED ?!
I WILL OBEY THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE. THIS HAS GONE ON TOO LONG. IT WOULD BE EASY TO GIVE MY LIFE IF IT BROUGHT COMFORT TO THOSE WHO HAVE DIED.
MY FATHER HAS FINALLY AGREED WITH THIS, TOO.
MY BROTHER AND MY FATHER ARE VERY MUCH ALIKE.
THEIR STRENGTH, THEIR IDEAS... AND THEIR STUBBORNESS.
ARE YOU MORE LIKE YOUR MOTHER ?
IT SEEMS THAT WAY.

VEEEEE
THOUGH YOUR PLANE NO LONGER CARRIES ANY WEAPONS, WE HAVE SERVICED IT AND SUPPLIED ENOUGH FUEL FOR YOUR RETURN YOU SHOULD MAKE IT BACK TO AREA 88 SAFELY
IS IT ALL RIGHT TO LET ME GO ?
IF THINGS GO WRONG, YOU'LL BE SHOT TO DEATH, TOO !
DON'T WORRY, I'VE ALREADY MADE A MOVE

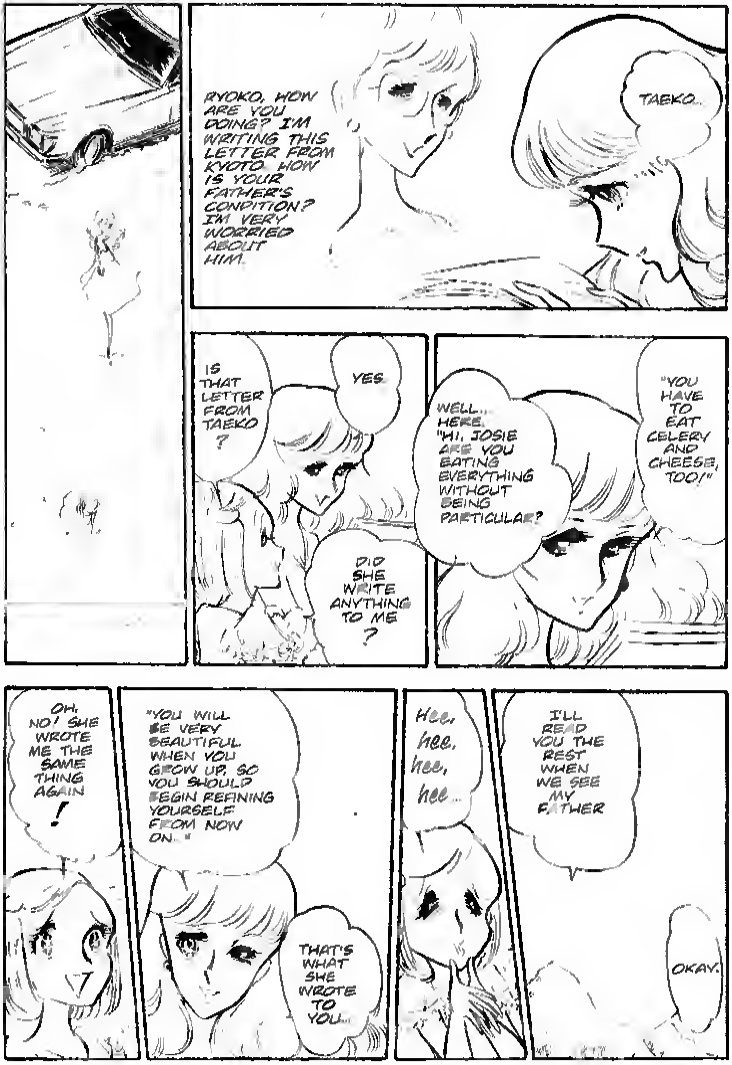
YOU KNOW, I MIGHT TELL SAKI NOTHING-- I MIGHT WANT THIS WAR TO CONTINUE...
AFTER ALL I MAKE MY LIVING FIGHTING IN WARS!
YOU ARE NOT THE KIND OF PERSON TO DO THAT... I KNOW IT WELL FROM THE CONVERSATIONS WE'VE HAD.
I DONT LIKE TO PLAY IT BOTH WAYS WHEN I DO BUSINESS.
BUT I OWE MY LIFE TO YOU...
MICK, I TRUST YOU... I BELIEVE YOU WILL TELL MY BROTHER WHAT I HAVE SAID.
PRINCE ZISHAR...
TAKE CARE, MICK.

SHARDOOM
SHEEEEEEE...
RISHAR, A GENTLE PRINCE, HIS CONVICTIONS BURN WARM LIKE COALS, RATHER THAN A PASSIONATE BONFIRE BLAZE...
...I DIDN'T WANT TO HEAR HIS PROBLEMS.
IT'LL BE HARDER FOR ME TO FIGHT NOW.

IT'S MICK! MICK'S COME BACK!!
YAAY!
YAHOO!
MICK!
MICK!
HEY.. YOU GUYS ARE STILL ALIVE!
BASTARD!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
HA, HA, HA.. I DON'T DIE SO EASILY!
I'M GLAD YOU'RE ALIVE!
WHEEEYE YOU BEEN WASTING TIME?!
MICK!
SHIN!
HOW THE HELL ARE YOU?! DOESN'T THIS JOINT BECOME A BORING PLACE WHEN I'M GONE?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! IT'S BEEN REAL QUIET-- A LOT NICER TO LIVE HERE.
WHAT A REMARK! CAN'T YOU BE A LITTLE NICER TO ME?!
WHERE'S SAKI?
I HAVE SOMETHING TO REPORT TO HIM...
SAKI WENT TO ZURICH TO GET TREATMENT FOR HIS EYES!
HE WON'T RETURN FOR A WHILE.
WHAT...?!
WHAT'S WRONG, MICK?
N-NO... IT'S NOTHING...

VOOOOM
JOSIE! DON'T STICK YOUR HEAD OUT THE WINDOW! IT'S DANGEROUS!
OH, WHAT PRETTY FLOWERS!
SCREECH
LET'S PICK SOME FLOWERS, AND TAKE THEM TO MY FATHER
OUCH!
RED FLOWERS.
BLUE FLOWERS
OH, SO MANY OF THEM!


RYOKO, HOW ARE YOU DOING? IM WRITING THIS LETTER FROM KYOTO. HOW IS YOUR FATHER'S CONDITION? IM VERY WORRIED ABOUT HIM.
TAEKO..
IS THAT LETTER FROM TAEKO ?
YES.
DID SHE WRITE ANYTHING TO ME ?
WELL.. HERE. "HI, JOSIE ARE YOU EATING EVERYTHING WITHOUT BEING PARTICULAR?
"YOU HAVE TO EAT CELERY AND CHEESE, TOO!"
OH, NO! SHE WROTE ME THE SAME THING AGAIN !
"YOU WILL BE VERY BEAUTIFUL WHEN YOU GROW UP, SO YOU SHOULD BEGIN REFINING YOURSELF FROM NOW ON.. "
THAT'S WHAT SHE WROTE TO YOU..
Hee, hee, hee..
I'LL READ YOU THE REST WHEN WE SEE MY FATHER
OKAY.

SMMT
CHAK
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SIR? YOU MUST BE TIRED AFTER SUCH A LONG DRIVE. I'LL TAKE YOU TO YOUR ROOM.
NO, I'M FINE
RYOKO, LET'S HURRY TO SEE YOUR FATHER!

TO BE CONTINUED